

NSC BRIEFING

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19 April 1955

PALESTINE BORDER SITUATION

- I. Ever since the Israeli attack on an Egyptian military post near Gaza on 28 Feb 55, the United Nations Truce Supervisor, Canadian General E. L. M. Burns, has been trying to work out a system which would cut down the frequency and severity of violence along Arab-Israeli borders (since the 28 Feb incident, peace on the frontier has been broken more than 30 times).
- A. Burns now proposes:
1. Increased numbers of truce observers.
  2. Joint border patrols (Egyptian and Israeli soldiers together) in the Gaza area.
  3. Physical barricades (barbed wire or other material) along the <sup>45 MILE</sup> Gaza demarcation line (established by 1949 armistice).
  4. Both Egypt and Israel to post only well-trained regulars in any area within one kilometer of the demarcation line.
- II. Meanwhile, Israel has proposed "high level" talks with Egypt as a means of easing border tensions, and has asked for US "good offices" in arranging them.
- A. The US, UK and France have agreed that such talks should be arranged through General Burns.
- B. Though originally restricting the subject of such talks to the Gaza problem, the Israelis later indicated that they want them to assume a wider, political focus.

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NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐

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III. Reactions to the Burns proposals are:

- A. More truce observers - both sides agree
- B. Only well-trained troops near line: both sides agree.
- C. Border barricade - Israelis favor: Egyptians oppose on grounds it tends to change armistice line into political frontier.
  - 1. However, Egypt may be willing to set up obstacles some distance back of demarcation line.
- D. Joint patrols - Egyptians favor: Israelis oppose, but have not yet flatly refused.

IV. As to Israel's proposal for talks, Egypt is unwilling to enter "high\_level" discussions.

- A. Cairo claims such talks would be politically unacceptable to the other Arab States at this time; also likely worried by domestic reaction.

V. Prospects for negotiations on both subjects appear as follows:

- A. General Burns reports his belief that prospects are fair for some kind of agreement between local commanders at Gaza.
  - 1. This could be like the agreement in Jerusalem area (18 Apr 55) which put opposing headquarters in direct telephone contact with each other.
- B. The two of Burns' points in dispute - barricade, joint patrols - seem doubtful of agreement.
- C. "High level" talks almost certainly out of question at present.
  - 1. Top-level Egyptians occupied at Bandung Conference.

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2. Agreement to talk with despised Israelis would be interpreted by other Arabs as sign of Egyptian weakness at time when Cairo regime sensing loss prestige.
- D. Thus, no dramatic shift for better is likely at present.
1. Indeed, mounting Israeli frustration over lack of progress may even bring to end the temporary relaxation which Burns' efforts have produced.

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